



Nepal dalitinfo International

An international information network site for Dalits of Nepal

Caste-based discrimination is a structural issue that Global Conference in Toronto calls to its end globally- Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali



Global Forum Against Caste-based Discrimination (Global Forum)
VOICELESS VOICES
(Special issue for CFWC2025) Volume 3 Issue 1 No. 4 April-June, 2025

Message from the President



It is my immense pleasure to publish the Voiceless Voices, Vol. 3, Issue 1, No. 4, April-June 2025, the quarterly magazine, being published by Global Forum Against Caste-based Discrimination (The Global Conference for a Caste-Free World (CFWC2025)), which is set to be held at Toronto, Canada on 25-27 May 2025.

The organizers have set the theme "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Elimination of Casteism. According to the organizers, the core areas to focus are inclusive dialogue and strategic and best practices to combat caste-based discrimination worldwide. The Conference will serve as a critical platform for international dialogue, listening on personal realities and policy-driven actions to end caste-based discrimination."

Prof. Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali says in a statement.

"The three-day event is expected to attract a diverse range of participants, including government agencies, policymakers, civil society representatives, business leaders, academic researchers, scholars, students, and activists" make the statement. It is believed that the discussions will explore how collective efforts can be strengthened to promote justice, equality and inclusive growth.

Caste-based discrimination and inequality have been severe issues for Nepal and especially South Asia region which is similar to the discrimination of South Asia, especially in India. The caste-based discrimination and untouchability have affected the global issues in Nepal and South Asia. Dalits speaking worldwide including American and European diaspora.

Although the UN has the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and several human rights covenants and conventions, it is observed that they still influence caste-based discrimination and untouchability worldwide not only in Nepal and South Asia but globally. To combat against these discrimination, oppression and atrocities, such conference would be a platform for bringing about discrimination-free world, enhancing equality and promoting social justice.

On behalf of the Global Forum, I believe that the Conference for a Caste-Free World (CFWC2025) will have immense depth and discourse on caste-based discrimination and untouchability from around Nepal and South Asia as well as American and European continents. I am hopeful that the global conference will be able to bring about lasting solutions for elimination of caste-based discrimination and untouchability worldwide not only in Nepal and South Asia but globally. To combat against these discrimination, oppression and atrocities, such conference would be a platform for bringing about discrimination-free world, enhancing equality and promoting social justice.

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chairperson, Global Forum

Global Conference for CFWC2025: Making a milestone for ending casteist atrocities

By DR. MAN RAMANUJAM
Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali

Various initiatives and rights activists have believed that the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World (CFWC2025) will have immense depth and discourse on caste-based discrimination and untouchability from around Nepal and South Asia as well as American and European continents. I am hopeful that the global conference will be able to bring about lasting solutions for elimination of caste-based discrimination and untouchability worldwide not only in Nepal and South Asia but globally. To combat against these discrimination, oppression and atrocities, such conference would be a platform for bringing about discrimination-free world, enhancing equality and promoting social justice.

When speaking from Nepal?

I issued my heartfelt gratitude to SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice for organizing the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 in Canada.

As the casteist atrocities have been spreading globally in a way or other, SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice-Canada, a non-profit organization registered in Canada, is organizing the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 in Canada.

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On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I wish the conference become grand success and realize our commitment to implementing its outcomes. Together, let us build a just, equitable, and caste-free world.

Dr. Man Ram Manu, Honorary Minister of Nepal

Dalit Round Table Conference to be held in Nepal

■ TV Reporter, Kathmandu

It was expected that Nepal's new constitution will take the issues of Dalits and other marginalized groups into account. However, the global conference will be able to bring about lasting solutions for elimination of caste-based discrimination and untouchability worldwide not only in Nepal and South Asia but globally. To combat against these discrimination, oppression and atrocities, such conference would be a platform for bringing about discrimination-free world, enhancing equality and promoting social justice.

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chairperson, Global Forum

Message from the Organizing Committee

Across the globe, more than 200 million people live in a caste system. It is a social hierarchy based on ascribed status, hereditary, and caste. What is a caste system? It is a social hierarchy based on ascribed status, hereditary, and caste. What is a caste system? It is a social hierarchy based on ascribed status, hereditary, and caste.

As the organizing body of the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, we are pleased to announce that the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 will be held in Toronto, Canada, from May 25-27, 2025. The theme of the conference is "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of Caste System."

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Caste-based discrimination is a structural issue that Global Conference in Toronto calls to its end globally



PROF. DR. DRONA PRAKASH RASALI, Chairperson, Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, Dealing Community

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chairperson of the Global Conference for a "Caste-Free World 2025" and the Founding Moderator of Nepal-Dalit-Info International Network. He is a population and public health expert based in Canada and an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia. In 2023, he was a Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Race and Health Policy in Law School at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA and is also a recipient of prestigious national award of Honorary Life Membership from the Canadian Public Health Association. The "Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025" is set to take place on May 25-26, 2025, in Toronto, Canada. The event is being organized by SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice, a non-profit organization registered in Canada. The primary objective of this conference is to foster solidarity for equality, social justice, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination prevalent in Nepal, India, and other countries worldwide. Nepal has been identified as one of the primary target nations for this conference. With view to this conference, Voiceless Voices a Quarterly magazine being published by Global Forum Against Caste-Discrimination has received the exclusive interview with Professor Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, the Chairperson of the Global Conference. The excerpt:

What issues does this global conference address globally?

This global conference will discuss the conditions and rights of over 200 million people worldwide who have traditionally suffered due to caste-based discrimination. Key topics of discussion will include the historical roots of caste systems, their socio-economic, cultural, and health-related impacts, educational policies and campaigns necessary for caste abolition, policy-making for social justice and equitable inclusion efforts, the impact of caste discrimination on human development, and the implications of caste systems in the context of climate change. More than 20 international academic presentations from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal have already confirmed their participation as speakers. Additionally, researchers, activist students, and policy analysts will present their findings through posters and oral presentations. Activities involving both local and international bodies against caste-based discrimination will also participate.

Does this conference release "Tensions Declaration" also?

At the conclusion of the conference, the "Tensions Declaration" will be issued, which will provide guidelines for future research, educational programs, civil society activities, and policy-making efforts. Spatial equity will be placed on coordinating with local, provincial, and national governments, as well as the international community, including the United Nations, to implement the recommendations outlined in the declaration. There are also considerations of plans to organize similar future conferences in various cities such as London, Washington, and Hong Kong in collaboration with local institutions and academic organizations.

How do you assess the role of Human Rights Institutions in Nepal and globally?

Human rights institutions have proven effective in addressing caste discrimination. For instance, Canada's strong human rights framework and legal infrastructure to combat caste-based discrimination effectively. Nepal and India are also working toward eliminating caste discrimination by implementing similar practical human rights frameworks, in addition to the full enforcement legal and constitutional provisions.

Did you face the dual burden of caste and gender discrimination?

Did you face the dual burden of caste and gender discrimination. They bear the heaviest burden of caste-based discrimination, which also includes the issue of gender-based oppression. Additionally, intergenerational psychological trauma has been observed to negatively impact their health. A study conducted by this author in the United States found that African-American women who experienced caste-based discrimination during their childhood had higher rates of low birth weight, mental health issues, and psychological stress.

What would be the next forward in India?

Researcher emphasize that ensuring political representation is crucial in addressing caste-based discrimination. Legal provisions must be established to ensure caste-based discrimination, such as intergenerational psychological trauma has been observed to negatively impact their health. A study conducted by this author in the United States found that African-American women who experienced caste-based discrimination during their childhood had higher rates of low birth weight, mental health issues, and psychological stress.

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Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chairperson of the Global Conference for a "Caste-Free World 2025" and the Founding Moderator of Nepal Dalit-Info International Network is a population and public health expert based in Canada and an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia. In 2023, he was Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Race and Health Policy in Law School at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA and is also a recipient of prestigious national award of Honorary Life Membership from the Canadian Public Health Association. The "Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025" is set to take place on May 25-26, 2025, in Toronto, Canada. The event is being organized by SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice, a non-profit organization registered in Canada. The primary objective of this conference is to foster solidarity

for equality, social justice, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination prevalent in Nepal, India, and other countries worldwide.

Nepal has been identified as one of the primary target nations for this conference. With view to this conference, **Voiceless Voices a Quarterly magazine** being published by Global Forum against Caste-Discrimination has received the exclusive interview with Professor Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, the Chairperson of the Global Conference.

The excerpts: PROF. DR. DRONA PRAKASH RASALI, Chairperson, Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025, Organizing Committee

What issues do this global conference address globally?

This global conference will discuss the conditions and plights of over 250 million people worldwide who have traditionally suffered due to caste-based discrimination. Key topics of discussion will include the historical evolution of caste structures, their socio-economic, cultural, and health-related impacts, educational policies and campaigns necessary for caste abolition, policy-making for social justice and reparative inclusion efforts, the impact of caste discrimination on migrant diaspora communities in western countries, and the implications of caste structures in the context of climate change. More than 20 renowned academic personalities from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal have already confirmed their participation as speakers. Additionally, researchers, university students, and policy analysts will present their findings through posters and oral presentations. Activists working at both local and international levels against caste-based discrimination will also participate.

Does this conference release “Toronto Declaration” also?

At the conclusion of the conference, the “Toronto Declaration” will be issued, which will provide guidance for future research, educational programs, civil society activities, and policy-making processes. Special emphasis will be placed on coordinating with local, provincial, and national governments, as well as the international community, including the United Nations, to implement the recommendations outlined in the declaration. There are also consideration of plans to organize similar future conferences in various cities such as London, Washington-Baltimore, and Hong Kong in collaboration with local institutions and academic organizations.

As a writer, researcher and professor, what are the impacts of Caste Systems in Nepal and India?

From the medieval era to the present, the feudal state system in Nepal and India has attempted to legitimize caste-based discrimination through religious justifications. However, recent anthropological and genetic studies have shown that human societies are inherently mixed. It is believed that caste structures in the Indian subcontinent began to develop nearly 4,000 years ago when ancient Eurasian pastoralists and Iranian agricultural farmers migrated to the region.

Initially, caste divisions were introduced under the pretext of labor division, primarily benefiting the ruling classes. Since this structure was human-made “social construct”, Dalits (historically marginalized communities) have remained systematically excluded, leading to their social, economic, cultural, and political marginalization. According to Nepal’s National Social Exclusion Survey (2018), Hill Dalits are over 12 times more excluded than Brahmins and Chhetris, while Terai Dalits face nine times more exclusion. Despite comprising nearly 15% of Nepal’s total population, Dalits are virtually absent from any positions of power. It is also notable that the caste-based crime incidents against Dalits are rising in India and Nepal in the past one decade.

What do you see the barriers of Dalits overall development and what do you suggest for a caste-free world/ or reform?

Caste discrimination is a structural issue rather than a matter of individual capability or willpower. The Constitution of Nepal recognizes Dalits as the most vulnerable and marginalized community and provisions for free education up to higher levels, reservations in employment, inclusive political representation, and access to land and other benefits to empower them. However, full implementation of these provisions is still lacking, as the parliament has yet to enact the necessary laws and regulations. Dalit families without land ownership rights are deprived of education, making it difficult for them to enter the formal job market, thereby forcing them to live in a state of perpetual economic deprivation. Due to limited access to resources and opportunities, Dalits are unable to attain positions of influence, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

How do you assess the role of Human Rights Mechanisms in Nepal and globally ?

Human rights mechanisms have proven effective in addressing caste discrimination. For instance, Canada’s strong human rights framework enables legal interventions to combat caste-based discrimination effectively. Nepal and India can also work toward eliminating caste discrimination by implementing similar practical human rights frame works, in addition to the full enforcement legal and constitutional provisions. Dalit women face the dual burden of caste and gender discrimination. They bear the brunt of household responsibilities while also enduring the worst impacts of caste-based oppression. Additionally, intergenerational psychological stress has been observed to negatively impact their health. A study conducted by this author in the United States found that African-American women experiencing such stress had higher rates of low birth weight in newborns.

What would be the way forward in future?

Researchers emphasize that ensuring political representation for Dalits is crucial in eradicating caste-based discrimination. Legal provisions must be established to improve access to education, employment opportunities, and economic empowerment. If these measures are implemented at local, provincial, and national levels, significant positive changes can be

achieved. As we move past the first quarter of the 21st century, the Toronto Declaration is expected to provide objective validation for a global movement aimed at eliminating caste-based and hereditary oppression. Sahayatra International, along with allied solidarity organizations, will advocate for the implementation of the declaration by engaging with the United Nations, relevant national agencies, and stakeholders through communication, dialogue, and action. ***Humanity must free itself from the unnatural, unnecessary, and unjust burden of caste hierarchy and classification while ensuring equality and social justice. The dismantling of caste-based structures is imperative to fostering an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect.*** To achieve this, the international community, including the United Nations, state governments, human rights organizations, social activist groups, educational institutions, and media, must collectively focus on the following key agenda points:

First, Ensuring Political Representation: Justice-based participation of Dalit and oppressed communities must be guaranteed in all branches of government.

Second, Legal and Policy Reforms: Structural caste discrimination should be addressed at its root through legislative measures and policy improvements.

Third, Economic and Educational Support: Economic restructuring is necessary to provide financial and educational assistance to marginalized communities.

Fourth, Cultural Transformation: Discriminatory traditions must be challenged to promote inclusivity and societal change.

Fifth, Addressing Health Disparities: Relevant stake holders should work toward raising awareness and preventing the adverse health effects caused by caste-based discrimination, such as intergenerational trauma and psychological stress.

Sixth, Leadership Development: Programs should be implemented to empower, strengthen, and make Dalit leadership more accountable.

Seventh, Allies from the Mainstream: Additionally, mainstream political and leadership figures must also undergo orientation and education to build allies among them with the clear understanding of the principles and perspectives of caste equality and social justice, which have often been found misrepresented.

Finally, I would urge all governments and state that this is the time for action, as the era of waiting for caste equality and social justice is over. Thank you all and hope for your effective participation and constructive suggestion and feedback there to make this conference a grand success!

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